June 29, 2005

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)

CDOT – Hwy 101, Culvert Rehabilitation HUM 97.4/122.36, DN 2.0/37.46
(WDID No. 1B05043WNHU)

Humboldt and Del Norte Counties

On April 13, 2005, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Ms. Gail Popham on behalf of California Department of Transportation (hereinafter applicant), requesting Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) to rehabilitate culverts and associated structures on seven watercourses along Highway 101 between Trinidad in Humboldt County and Smith River in Del Norte County. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with an unnamed tributary to the Little River, Savage Creek, and an unnamed tributary to Stone Lagoon in the Trinidad Hydrologic Unit No.108.00, an unnamed tributary to Prairie Creek in the Orick Hydrologic Area No. 107.10, an unnamed tributary to Waukell Creek in the Klamath Glen Hydrologic Subarea No. 105.11, and an unnamed tributary to Morrison Creek in the Smith River Plain Hydrologic Subarea No. 103.11.

The purpose of the proposed project is to replace or repair drop inlets, headwalls, culverts, downdrains, endwalls, and outlet structures. The proposed project involves excavation, concrete and grouting work, invert paving, trenching, installation of culvert liners, and installation of energy dissipating structures. Equipment used for this project will include concrete trucks, dump trucks, backhoes, excavators, sump pumps, trenchers, and bobcats. Equipment staging and storage areas will be on existing paved roadways, shoulders, and gravel pullouts. Any excess material generated from the project will be hauled to an approved disposal site. Impacts to riparian vegetation will be limited to the stems and foliage of shrubs and other herbaceous vegetation (red elderberry, willows, ferns, coltsfoot, and ladyfern). Plant roots will remain intact and these plants are expected to grow back quickly.

The project at Post Mile 97.74 is located approximately 3 miles south of Trinidad. The existing culvert at this site is a corroded 48-inch diameter, 338-foot long corrugated steel pipe that leaks. The culvert conveys an unnamed perennial tributary to Little River. The natural gradient of this unnamed tributary is too steep for anadromous fish passage. The applicant proposes to insert a solid wall plastic liner into the existing culvert, to grout the void between the culvert walls, and to install a rock energy dissipater (RED) at the outlet. The RED will permanently impact 80 square-feet of streambed. A temporary dam will be placed upstream of the culvert to dewater the culvert area. Water will be pumped downstream of the outlet or into a sediment tank. Access to the culvert will require disturbance to herbaceous upland vegetation and may require removal of several 3-inch to 6-inch diameter red alders.

The project at Post Mile 103.66 is located approximately 3 miles north of Trinidad. The existing culvert at this site is a corroded 60-inch diameter, 526-foot long corrugated steel pipe. This culvert conveys Savage Creek, a perennial stream, under Highway 101. The natural gradient downstream of the culvert is too steep for anadromous fish passage, however; the stream is suitable habitat for coastal cutthroat trout, tailed frog, northern red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, and southern torrent salamander. The applicant proposes to place a temporary dam upstream of the culvert and to convey water through the culvert in a PVC pipe to dewater the work area. The invert of the existing culvert will be paved, the flared inlet will be replaced with

a concrete headwall, and a RED will be installed at the outlet. The new headwall will permanently impact approximately 6 square-feet of creek channel and the RED will permanently impact approximately 50 square-feet of creek channel. The applicant indicates that in order to access the culvert, it may be necessary to disturb approximately 100 square-feet of herbaceous riparian vegetation and approximately 3280 square-feet of herbaceous upland vegetation (sword fern and blackberry). No trees or shrubs will be removed. Access to the inlet and outlet may result in additional temporary impacts to the creek and riparian vegetation. Based on the applicant's Natural Environmental Study, this project is not expected to have any adverse impact to listed anadromous fish or other sensitive biological resources.

The project at Post Mile 115.3 is located south of the Stone Lagoon visitor center. The existing culvert at this site is a 24-inch diameter, 92-foot long corrugated steel pipe. The culvert conveys an unnamed perennial stream under Highway 101 and into Stone Lagoon. The culvert does not show signs of corrosion but it is full of sediment. The applicant proposes to replace this culvert with a 72-inch diameter corrugated steel pipe with a concrete headwall. The new headwall will permanently impact 6-square feet of streambed. The applicant proposes to place a temporary dam upstream of the culvert, and to pump water through a diversion pipe. The existing culvert would be abandoned. The new culvert invert will be placed 1-to-2 feet below the existing flow level to provide a natural substrate bottom. This stream has habitat for steelhead, coho salmon and coastal cutthroat trout although only cutthroat trout have been found at the project site. There is no chinook salmon spawning habitat in tributaries to Stone Lagoon and no record of chinook in Stone Lagoon. This project is designed to enhance and improve fish habitat and fish passage. The federally listed tidewater goby is present in Stone Lagoon; however, this stream is too steep for goby passage. Best management practices will be implemented to control downstream sedimentation and prevent impacts to goby habitat. One 12-inch diameter alder tree will be removed to accommodate the larger culvert. Access at the inlet and outlet may result in other minor permanent and temporary impacts to the stream and riparian vegetation.

The project site at Post Mile 115.51 is located north of the Stone Lagoon visitor center. The existing culvert at this site is an 18-inch diameter, 102-foot long corrugated steel pipe. The culvert conveys an unnamed seasonal stream under the highway and into Stone Lagoon. The culvert bottom is corroded. The applicant proposes to insert a plastic liner into the existing culvert, and to grout the void between the culvert walls. Construction will be done when the culvert is dry. The project will result in approximately 250 square-feet of temporary stream and wetlands disturbance at the inlet end. The applicant does not propose to use heavy equipment at the outlet, but workers accessing the outlet to install the liner may cause minor temporary impacts to the stream channel. The outlet opens to the dry shore of the lagoon, the stream only flows for approximately two to three months each year, and there is no salmonid spawning habitat in this stream.

The project at Post Mile 122.36 is located approximately one mile north of Orick. This culvert conveys a perennial spring and roadside runoff into Prairie Creek. The existing drop inlet on this culvert is a traffic hazard. The corrugated steel downdrain on the 54-foot long concrete box culvert is corroded. The applicant proposes to remove and replace the existing drop inlet and downdrain, to add rock slope protection under the downdrain, and to place a RED at the outlet. The project will result in temporary impacts to approximately 30 square-feet of wetland and may temporarily impact various species of concern including the northern red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, and southern torrent salamander. Prairie Creek is essential fish habitat for coho salmon and chinook salmon. All work will be done from the paved roadway above

ordinary high water and other measures will be taken as necessary to avoid impacts to Prairie Creek. The project may result in minor temporary impacts to upland vegetation and amphibians.

The project at Post Mile 2.0 is located approximately 15 miles north of Orick. The existing 36-inch diameter corrugated steel pipe coveys an unnamed tributary into Waukell Creek. The applicant proposes to fit this culvert with a plastic liner, to grout the void between the culvert walls, and to install a RED at the outlet. The 108-foot downdrain is corroded through and will also be replaced. Waukell Creek contains anadromous fish, however; the gradient above the culvert outlet is too steep to allow fish passage and there is no spawning habitat above the culvert. The applicant may dewater the culvert by installing a temporary dam upstream of the culvert and pumping the water around the work area. The applicant proposes to use an excavator to access the outlet to install the rock energy dissipater. Access and construction at the inlet and outlet may involve temporary impacts to wetlands, the creek, and riparian vegetation. The RED will permanently impact approximately 80 square-feet of streambed at the outlet. The applicant proposes to restore disturbed areas to natural contours. Work at this site may result in minor temporary effects on amphibians, however; there will be no adverse impacts to sensitive biological resources.

The project at Post Mile 37.46 is located approximately 2 miles south of the town of Smith River. The endwall of the existing dual 36-inch concrete culvert needs to be replaced. The culvert conveys an unnamed perennial stream into Morrison Creek. The applicant proposes to install a new cast in place endwall, to pave the culvert inverts, and to install a RED at the outlet. The new endwall and RED will permanently impact 200 square-feet of stream channel. The applicant indicates that activities associated with preparing the site for the endwall and RED will result in temporary impacts to approximately 400 square-feet of streambed at the outlet.

The applicant has applied for authorization to perform the proposed project under Nationwide Permits Nos. 3, 14 and 33 from the United States Army Corps of Engineers, pursuant to the Clean Water Act, Section 404. The California Department of Transportation, as the lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has determined that this project will have no significant effect on the environment, and is categorically exempt from CEQA (Class 1). The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (1601 Permit) from California Department of Fish and Game.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act Authority. In addition, staff will consider all comments received during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Regional Water Board staff member Dean Prat by phone at (707) 576-2801, or e-mail dprat@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

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